Public Health Committee
Public Hearing
March 5, 2007

Testimony of Margaret Peggy Mayo, LCSW
Social Worker, VITAS Innovative Hospice Care

My name is Margaret Peggy Mayo. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and I have been working in the hospice field since 1998. I am here this morning to testify in support of Raised Bill No. 7193 which recognizes a state regulatory scheme for hospice-only providers in the State of Connecticut.

At VITAS Innovative Hospice Care, we recognize that true suffering is complex, including not just physical but emotional, social and spiritual. It can present as social isolation - a woman who has outlived her clan, alone in a facility. It can be a man who is far from his children, who cannot travel to be with him at this time. Maybe no one else will talk about what is happening, and there is great aloneness in this. It can be financial burden, not knowing how to help assure that an elderly spouse has the resources needed after death. It can be emotional, fear of the unknown, anguish from unresolved relationship issues, or just never having been given permission or the know-how to have conversations with loved ones. VITAS' full time social workers work closely with patients and their families, making visits to them in their homes, calling to reassure families who are far away, and supporting the facility staff who care daily for dying patients. They work to relieve financial burden by working with charitable funding to add quality of life for patients, such as by getting an air conditioner unit installed so that the patient can stay home to die during a heat wave. VITAS' value of putting patients and family first is strongly demonstrated by our commitment to attend all deaths. The team approach assures that we are present when death is anticipated, that we are there after the death to be with the family, and that we are part of the memorials for that patient. It is important that we look at how to better serve the patients with life-limiting illness and appreciate the Committee taking this time to do so. Are there any questions for me?